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Letter dated 23 July 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to attach herewith a letter from Khaled Khoja, President of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces, dated 22 July 2015, addressed to the President of the Security Council (see annex).

It would be greatly appreciated if the present letter and its annex were circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Abdallah Y. **Al-Mouallimi**
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 23 July 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

In advance of the Security Council's open debate on the Middle East, it is with great alarm and urgency that I draw your attention to the rising civilian death toll in Zabadani, Syria. For close to three weeks, Syrian regime forces and Hezbollah terrorists have overseen a murderous assault on Zabadani, pounding the Syrian town with more than 600 barrel bombs at a rate of more than 30 bombs a day.

According to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, the regime's indiscriminate aerial attacks on Zabadani have caused "unprecedented levels of destruction and many deaths among the civilian population". The regime's calculated siege of Zabadani, along with its targeting of civilian-occupied areas with warplanes and helicopters, have turned the town to rubble and left thousands without access to food, water and medical care.

In a statement issued on 22 July 2015, the Special Envoy called upon the Syrian government "to halt the use of crude and indiscriminate weapons, such as barrel bombs, on its own cities". It is imperative that the Security Council issue a similar demand and condemn the Syrian regime's ruthless targeting of civilians inside Zabadani. It is also imperative that the Council condemn the atrocities perpetrated by Hezbollah terrorists and Iranian forces across the Qalamoun region.

Located north-west of Rif Dimashq, near the Lebanese border, Zabadani has emerged as the centrepiece of the regime's collusion with Hezbollah terrorists and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard. Hezbollah terrorists and Iranian forces now operate freely across Syria, brazenly perpetrating atrocities against Syrian civilians, with the full knowledge and consent of the Assad regime.

Tragically, foreign meddling in Zabadani is just the latest example of the growing regional ramifications of the Syrian crisis. For over four years, Syria's neighbours have had to bear the burden of Syria's humanitarian crisis — becoming home to a record 4 million refugees. Over the past 18 months, Syria itself has become home to the heinous terrorist group, ISIL, which now controls a third of Syrian territory and oversees a population of some 6 million people, more than 350,000 of whom are children.

The regional escalation of the Syrian crisis represents a direct threat to international peace and security. The Security Council has thus far failed to address or prevent that threat. It is critical that the Council do so now, including by adopting the following measures:

- **Condemning the atrocities perpetrated by Hezbollah** inside Syria and demanding that Hezbollah withdraw from Syrian territory
- **Ensuring utmost vigilance in the monitoring of the Iranian nuclear deal** and Security Council resolution 2231 (2015), which, when implemented, could potentially release billions of dollars to the Iranian regime, which the Security Council must ensure is not used to fuel and arm the Syrian regime's killing machine

- **Stopping the Syrian regime's indiscriminate aerial bombardment of Syria**, which is responsible for more than 60 per cent of all civilian deaths in Syria and the vast majority of deaths in Zabadani, by authorizing a safe zone

On 2 June 2015, Iranian General Qasem Soleimani warned: "The world will be surprised by what we [Iran] and the Syrian military leadership are preparing for the coming days". Today we know what that surprise entailed. In Zabadani and elsewhere, Iran is working to fund, fuel and facilitate Assad's atrocities, at the expense of ordinary civilians. Any agreement to ease sanctions against the Iranian regime must not come at the expense of the Syrian people.

On behalf of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces and the thousands of innocent men, women and children trapped inside Zabadani, I therefore ask that the Security Council condemn Iranian aggression in Syria and adopt the measures needed to save lives in Syria and stop the Syrian crisis from escalating further.

(*Signed*) Khaled **Khoja**
President of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution
and Opposition Forces